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Letter to Ned Schnurman

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2 January 1974

Mr. Ned Schnurman
Associate Director
The National News Council
One Lincoln Plaza
New York City, New York 10023

Dear Ned:

In response to your note of 20 December, I too have given thought to the optimum timing and phrasing of the announcement of the Cambridge assignment.

I am inclined to think that whatever the timing, the announcement will in no way be inimical to the progress of the Council, which has now hardily weathered its pioneering first months. The Cambridge assignment does not begin until fall, still a good distance away, and as I told you and Bill and Murray I stand ready to serve until that time, and even periodically thereafter, on an uncompensated basis, in whatever ways you may deem helpful to the Council.

Though there is hence no urgency about a release, it does make sense to have one ready for whatever time, near or far, appears most propitious. I don't think any would-be critics of the Council are going to find much to seize on at any time, given the continuation of my association with the Council that dates from the Council's inception. It is certainly no news to anyone that a life-long interest in legal education still binds me close to students and teachers throughout the world; a number of people at least in the law are aware of the various requests, still in abeyance, that I distill in lectures or writing the materials of opinions and essays and unfinished work.

There will be ample opportunity between now and our next meeting to reflect upon the timing for the announcement of the Cambridge assignment or the appointment of a new Council chairman or both. I have not myself acquainted anyone with the assignment except my family and Dean Marvin Anderson of Hastings College of Law. Nonetheless

2 January 1974

the news is bound to reach others soon, before there has been adequate time to decide upon a successor chairman. You may therefore want to have a preliminary release on the ready for whatever time emerges as suitable coupling announcement of the Cambridge assignment with the fact that I will be continuing to serve the Council as Chairman or in an advisory capacity (assuming, of course, that the Council members want me to do so) for some months to come. Such a preliminary release should convey a message of continuity and full steam ahead.

If it develops that a successor chairman can be found quickly, so much the better, for that would obviate any need for a preliminary release. That development is unpredictable, however, and the Council should take its time to sound out possibilities.

With the foregoing in mind, I have made a revised draft of your proposed release, which I enclose, geared to conveying a message of affirmation for the Council.

You will note that I have struck the entire fifth paragraph of your draft. Given today's youth-orientation, together with the likelihood that a successor chairman may also be an elder statesman, there seems little to be gained for the Council by highlighting a birthdate.

Likewise there seems little to be gained for the Council by highlighting that I have waived compensation, or even by announcing any specific compensation in connection with the office. Although these details are of no consequence to me, I think they might hamper the Council in negotiating with one possible successor or another. For example, any chairman will necessarily have to have a good deal of clerical help. He may be fortunate enough to have substantial volunteer help or, if he is located in or near New York, he may be able to rely on your own staff. A chairman at some distance away, however, might want to have some part of his compensation allocated for clerical help.

Finally, I think it would be inappropriate to make mention of any assignments I have turned down. As it happens, I have turned down a goodly collection of proposed assignments these past two years, and have even had to cancel commitments made before that time. These matters are outside the domain of news relating to the Council.

For future reference, a salient error in that stricken fifth paragraph should also be noted. I was not on the original Twentieth Century Fund Task Force that

Mr. Ned Schnurman

-3-

2 January 1974

recommended formation of the Council. Any member of the Task Force is precluded from serving even as a member of the Council, let alone as chairman.

I have high hopes for the Council in 1974 and extend all good wishes to you for a fine year.

Sincerely yours,

Roger J. Traynor

cc: M. J. Rossant
cc: William B. Arthur